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CMS APPROVES FEDERAL FUNDING FOR FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTERS

The KHPA announced today more federal funding for critical safety net providers that provide health care to low income Kansans. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has approved a Kansas state plan amendment (SPA) to make changes to Medicaid reimbursement and services for Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). The proposed changes are expected to improve and expand coverage for Medicaid consumers as well as offer better reimbursement for qualified clinics that accept Medicaid.

According to KHPA Deputy Director and State Medicaid Director, Dr. Andrew Allison, "We count on Federally Qualified Health Centers to serve their communities. They provide primary care services to the neediest health consumers who have no place else to turn for necessary medical treatment. We are pleased to have partnered with the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved (KAMU) to increase Federal support for safety net clinics throughout Kansas. The Kansas Health Policy Authority will continue to pursue opportunities to expand health care services and affordable health insurance to the working poor in our state."

Federally Qualified Health Centers are community based organizations that provide comprehensive primary and preventive health, oral, and mental health/substance abuse services to persons in all stages of the life cycle, regardless of their ability to pay. FQHCs must serve an underserved area or population, offer a sliding fee scale, provide comprehensive services, have an ongoing quality assurance program, and have a governing board of directors.

There are currently 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers in Kansas. In 2007, these FQHC's served over 97,000 consumers, an increase of 26.8% since 2005. The changes approved by CMS are expected to increase Medicaid payments to Kansas clinics by at least \$575,000 in state fiscal year 2009.

"FQHCs play a critical role in providing primary care in our state, especially at time when Kansas was only one of ten states where the number of uninsured increased last year" according to KHPA Executive Director Dr. Marcia Nielsen. "But for those with cancer or other debilitating disease who require prescription drugs or specialty care, patients also need quality affordable health insurance. We look forward to working with the Kansas legislature to keep these critical issues high on the policy agenda for next year".

For more information about Kansas FQHCs, please visit the Kansas Association for the Medically Underserved website at: <http://www.kspca.org/aboutus.html>

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